

US uncertainty

The number of international students in the USA increased during the 2000/2001 academic year, yet forecasts for the future remain cautious due to the events of September 11 last year. **Bethan Norris** reports.

As statistics for the current academic year are not yet available, it is difficult to accurately assess what effect the terrorist attacks in the USA in September last year had on international student numbers in the USA. According to the *Open Doors 2001* report, published by the Institute of International Education, international student numbers for the 2000/2001 academic year preceding September 11 increased by 6.4 per cent. However, with the country's heavy reliance on the Asian student market - the top four student nationalities were Chinese, Indian, Japanese and South Korean, which made up 38 per cent of the total international student population - some industry insiders are predicting decreases from key student markets this year.

Ravi Singh, from Global Reach agency in India, warns that, although the USA is still the top destination for his clients, statistics for the 2001/2002 academic year will show a decrease in the number of Indian

students studying there. 'There is no real change in the [US] visa policy for Indian students,' he says. 'It is just the phobia in the marketplace that is keeping students away.' The number of Indian students in the USA grew by 29 per cent in 2000/2001 to become the second-largest international student nationality. However, according to Singh, since last September, New Zealand and Australia have become more popular at the expense of the USA.

The Japanese student market has also been adversely affected, according to education agents in Japan. Hiroya Takagi, from the Study Abroad Specialist agency in Japan, says, 'The USA was the number-one destination for our clients before September 11, but this disaster made our clients cancel their courses, postpone their departure dates or change their destination.' However, he adds, 'The situation has been getting better and no one mentions the terrorist attacks [now].'

Mieko Otoshi, from Japan Foundation Intercultural Exchange,

Overseas students by country of origin in colleges and universities in the USA

	1997/1998	1998/1999	% change 97/98 v 99	1999/2000	% change 98/99 v 99/00	2000/2001	% change 99/00 v 00/01
China	46,958	51,001	8.6	54,466	6.8	59,939	10
India	33,818	37,482	10.8	42,337	13.0	54,664	29.1
Japan	47,073	46,406	-1.4	46,872	1.0	46,497	-0.8
South Korea	42,890	39,199	-8.6	41,191	5.1	45,685	10.9
Taiwan	30,855	31,043	0.6	29,234	-5.8	28,566	-2.3
Canada	22,051	22,746	3.2	23,544	3.5	25,279	7.4
Indonesia	13,282	12,142	-8.6	11,300	-6.9	11,625	2.9
Thailand	15,090	12,489	-17.2	10,983	-12.1	11,187	1.9
Mexico	9,559	9,641	0.9	10,607	10	10,670	0.6
Turkey	9,081	9,377	3.3	10,100	7.7	10,983	8.7
Germany	9,309	9,568	2.8	9,800	2.4	10,128	3.3
Brazil	6,982	8,052	15.3	8,600	6.8	8,846	2.9
UK	7,534	7,765	3.1	7,990	2.9	8,139	1.9
Others	200,080	206,164	3.0	218,999	6.2	215,659	-1.5
Total	481,280	490,933	2.0	514,723	4.8	547,867	6.4

Source: Institute of International Education

reports that Canada has gained in popularity since last September, but that 'short-term study has been most affected while long-term programmes are less affected'.

Fears regarding student safety, combined with the uncertainty surrounding the USA's military intervention in Afghanistan, meant that students from a number of markets lost confidence in the USA in the immediate aftermath of the attacks. Jennifer Chamberlain, Director of International Student Services at Hope International University in Kansas, reports that the USA has been losing out to other study destinations since the attacks. 'The events of September 11 have meant potential students favour England, Australia and New Zealand. The families of potential students consider the USA unsafe at this time,' she says.

However, other institutions and consultants involved in the US international education market are

confident that any decrease in interest for education programmes will be temporary. James Harter, Assistant Vice President for International Education at Emporia State University in Kansas, reports that the terrorist attacks had 'little or no effect' on the majority of their international students and, overall, enrolments at the university have not been affected. 'We noticed fewer enquiries immediately following September 11 but applications are back to normal now,' he says.

Musa Khalidi, Director of International Student Admissions at Earlham College in Indiana - where traditional student markets are Japan and the Middle East - is optimistic about international student recruitment in the future. 'Next year, I plan to focus on recruiting in Japan since Earlham has had a long history of recruiting students from that country. I am also considering travelling to central America, to countries such as Costa Rica,' he says.

Selection of higher education institutions in the USA

Name of school	Location	Use agents	No. of students	% overseas students
Abilene Christian University	TX	✓	4,600	5
Albertson College of Idaho	ID	✓	778	2
American University	DC		11,000	11
Barnard College, Columbia University	NY		2,300	4
Central Michigan University	MI		19,188	3
Chaminade University of Hawaii	HI		1,000	2.5
Clark University	MA		2,600	8
Columbia College	IL		9,416	4
Earlham College	IN		1,130	7
Emporia State University	KS		5,600	3
Hope International University	CA	✓	1,000	12
The Naropa Institute	CO		1,000	6
Texas Christian University	TX	✓	8,054	5.5
Thiel College	PA	✓	1,200	6
Tompkins Cortland Community College	NY		2,815	4